

Bridging the Gap

Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners
transitioning between grade six and seven.

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Abstract

This research centred around the question of what drama therapy techniques are appropriate in aiding refugee young people in their transition to grade 7 government schools from a dedicated refugee school in Johannesburg. Initial exploratory interviews were conducted with professionals in the field and along with relevant literature, four areas of focus were found through a grounded theory analysis to be important when working with refugee young people: Program Realities versus Changing Needs, Education, Loss versus Meaning Making, and Story versus Silence. The overarching theme of the research was thus identified as Creating Narrative from Chaos. A further question arising from the analysis was how to incorporate story when working with refugee young people in a way that will ensure that their voices are heard and valued above that of the therapist or researcher. A short pilot intervention was then carried out with ten grade 6 learners from Three2Six School over a period of eight weeks. The sessions involved the use of the 6 Part Story Method as an assessment tool, as well as incorporating the use of story and role. Three areas of interest arose from the pilot study, which was also subjected to a grounded theory analysis: Me within the World, The Role of Drama Therapy, and The Unknown. Although further research is needed which conducts a more in-depth and long-term efficacy-based intervention, the drama therapy techniques of story and role were found to be useful tools in therapeutic work with refugee young people in this context.

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Once Upon a Time there lived a Refugee Child

As of January 2014, South Africa contained nearly 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers within its borders, 200,000 of these being asylum seekers. The majority of these refugees and asylum seekers journey to Johannesburg, seen as the economic hub of the country, and the city with the highest possibility of finding employment and support. (UNHCR 2014)

Unlike many countries, South Africa has no refugee camps, choosing to follow a rights-based approach, affording refugees the right to work, move around the country, and access social services (Clacherty 2006). However, this means that refugees and asylum seekers receive little direct assistance from Government, and face many obstacles in accessing their rights. As Clacherty (2006) states, “[m]any would-be asylum seekers are refused access to government offices if they cannot pay bribes. Others wait years to be granted formal refugee status...[h]ostility from the police, government, service providers and South African citizens makes life difficult..[t]he government has undertaken to reform this system, but change is slow in coming” (15).

My own journey with refugees and asylum seekers began late in 2012, whilst I pursued my Honours degree in Applied Drama and Theatre in Johannesburg. I came into contact with a volunteer working at the Three2Six School, a dedicated refugee school in Observatory. Three2Six School offers education for young refugees and asylum seekers, from grade 1 to 6, primarily focussing on English, Mathematics and Science, in the hopes that the children will go on to integrate into public schools from grade 7 onwards, joining the South African school system. These refugee young people are not newly-arrived, many of them having been in South Africa for more than two years. By the beginning of 2013, I had been accepted as a Theatre Fellow with The Do School in Hamburg, a social entrepreneurship incubator. My project was to create an intervention with the grade 6 students at Three2Six, enabling,

through applied drama techniques, the students to create a mixed media theatre production and, in the process, gain a platform to express themselves and a rare opportunity to play. The project was to provide a creative addition to mainstream education, developing artistic skills whilst cultivating self-esteem, self-efficacy and hope. This endeavour became known as The Far-Fetched Project.

The Far-Fetched Project borrowed from Boal's (1992) Image Theatre, and certain other Theatre for Development techniques in order to uncover the subjects that the students wished to work with, and developed these themes into a short production which was performed for the school's end of year prize giving. The play focussed on issues of family, trust, faith, and money, and was scripted and improvised by the children themselves. During the course of the weekly workshops, the themes that emerged and were explored were diverse, incorporating self-image, hopes and dreams, fears and struggles, and likes and dislikes. A notable outcome of the workshops was the shift in the children's perception of self. Where previously the children, when asked, would describe themselves purely in terms of physical attributes, after the workshops the children were able to describe themselves in terms of character traits, personal likes and dislikes and dreams for the future. Of course, lacking empirical research, this shift cannot be entirely attributed to the children's participation in the workshop; however it can be considered a notable feature of the work.

There were also some troubling aspects of The Far-Fetched Project's work at the school, which ultimately strengthened my resolve to continue my work with the students. In my own opinion the prejudice experienced by refugee children daily is quite astonishing. The hosting school where Three2Six is situated appeared to struggle with the intricacies of sharing school space with children from such a seemingly different context and culture. Certainly, the logistics and complexities of sharing and owning space is difficult, however when issues of

nationality and culture are added to this, sharing space can be nearly impossible to accomplish amicably.

As McArdle and Spina (2007) articulate, “[f]or parents who have recently immigrated to a new country, enrolling their child in an early childhood program is one moment where cultural values of their home and adopted culture come into contact and, often, conflict” (50). With these issues prevalent in schools so geared towards reconciliation and integration, clearly intervention is necessary for the refugee child entering a mainstream South African school environment where refugees are uncommon. In this environment refugee students can be seen as “ranging from alienated, violent and angry, to underperforming, vulnerable and paranoid. In educational settings these kinds of behaviours are viewed by some as maladaptive and undesirable” (McArdle & Spina 2007:50).

It was also during this period that I began to explore my own reasons for engaging with the refugee population. Again and again I was asked to explain why a middle-class, white, private school educated, South African young woman would choose to work with a population so far from my own apparent life experience. It was only in 2014, when I engaged again with the work as part of my Master’s degree that I began to be able to answer these questions.

I created a site-specific piece of theatre entitled *Homeostasis*, intended as a way to allow ordinary Johannesburg citizens to experience something of the difficulty of the refugee life in South Africa. *Homeostasis* formed the basis of my practice-led research project, a method in which the aims and outcomes of the research emerge in “the processes of generation, selection, shaping and editing material in practice” (Nelson 2006:112). Ultimately the research aimed to find a performative way to explore my own links, projections and preconceptions to refugee issues in South Africa, and through this, attempted to find a

method that could be useful to other artist-activists who find themselves so underdistanced that they cannot find their way past the emotion to produce theatre that is clear, compassionate and active-empathy building.

Homeostasis shoved the audience into the role of asylum seekers arriving at the border of South Africa. There was no enrolling process, but rather the audience was alienated from the very first level of the piece. A tall, well-dressed man divided the audience into groups, seemingly on a whim. The groups of spectators, more bewildered than enrolled, were then forced to make choices as to their priorities as a newly arrived group. The instructions were given by a hostile and impatient home affairs official, who gave the groups little time to decide before handing out elaborate masks that the groups were to wear for the remainder of the production.

The masks were chosen for several reasons, the first being simply so that the groups would be easily recognisable as ‘different’ or ‘odd’ to the members of the public that would be sharing the elevators and spaces of the performance in their daily tasks. Curious and confused by the appearance of fifty or so masked figures running through the building, the members of the public played their role out unknowingly, strange looks and whispered conversations serving to mirror the response of South Africans in general to the accents, appearance and customs of the foreigners that live among us. The masks also meant that the actors could make derogatory remarks at the groups without singling out any of their actual features or attributes. The masks served to distance the audience from their roles, although, as Landy (1994) argues, masks are inherently less distancing than other costume items, as they are worn on the face.

The groups then passed through several stages. They encountered an NGO worker who, although enthusiastic and sincere, had not the time, funding, nor support to offer a sustainable

intervention. They found, with dismay, what was advertised as a homeless shelter, but in reality was a few blankets and motivational posters tucked away in a stairwell corner. They were subjected to identity photographs for their application renewals, holding up placards with xenophobic slogans on them. They literally climbed through red tape in order to access psychosocial support from a young psychology intern that, although determined to be helpful, spoke only German, a language none of the audience members could comprehend.

There was also a reflection room provided, although the 40 minute time limit meant that groups could not afford to linger long. The room asked questions attempting to draw what Jones (1996) calls, the 'life-drama connection', allowing the groups to reflect on the feelings that the performance was stirring up, and then asking them to find links to periods in their own lives where they had perhaps felt a similar kind of isolation, prejudice or confusion.

Following the process, the groups gathered for a short 15 minute reflection, where they could take off their masks and verbally reflect on their experience. The brevity of this session fell dismally short of the containment that was needed in light of the strong emotions felt by the audience, but due to the fact that the show was part of a theatre season, the next show starting minutes from the end of *Homeostasis*, this could not be remedied.

Homeostasis created a space for me to question my motives in working with the refugee population. It was a painful process of critical reflection and questioning, made all the more uncomfortable for the fact that this process was to form an academic piece of practice as research work. This period forced me to reflect on my own experiences of displacement and isolation, much of which still lay unprocessed within my psyche. I made connections with my identity as a 2 decade resident of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the upheaval of my move to Gauteng alone to study. I remembered the feelings of my younger self, experiencing the divorce of my parents and understanding deeply that the idea of 'home' could never be as safe or as

consistent as it had once been. In short, I found the displaced part of myself that was asking for healing, the part of me that had ultimately led me to work with displaced and isolated people, and I began to work through some of what would be necessary in order to do the work safely for myself and fairly for my participants.

This process is an ongoing conversation between the wounded parts of myself and the researcher, a balance between my needs and the needs of my participants. This is the work, I believe, of the researcher in 2015, who can no longer pretend to be the unbiased and objective researcher, but must instead work to acknowledge and balance their own prejudice, presumption and wounding in order to produce the valuable and relevant work that occurs when human meets human.

In short, the Three2Six School in Johannesburg offers a unique opportunity for approximately 200 refugee young people. However, this supportive school community cannot provide for the learners beyond grade 6. The transition from primary to middle or high school is often a tumultuous and anxious period for young people (Lucey & Reay 2000). This anxiety is further confounded by the potentially traumatic life experiences of the refugee young people, however there is a danger in assuming that refugee young people have been, and remain, traumatised by these experiences, and disregarding their resilience and mastery of transition.

The aim of this research project was to design a drama therapeutic intervention to assist in the transition of grade 6 refugee learners from Three2Six School in Johannesburg into various government middle and high schools. The research asked: What drama therapy techniques are appropriate in aiding refugee young people in their transition to grade 7 government schools from a dedicated refugee school in Johannesburg? The research took place in two

phases: Phase One being the design of the intervention and exploratory interviews whilst Phase Two was the implementation and evaluation of a short pilot intervention.

Chapter one of this research report elaborates on Phase One, and analyses the interviews and literature that form an exploratory basis for the intervention. As the two phases are distinct from each other, an explanation of the methods used will be integrated into each phase.

Chapter two considers the theoretical underpinning of the research, and elaborates on the drama therapeutic techniques of Sesame, Narradrama and the 6-Part Story Method, all of which form an integral part of the intervention. Chapter three describes and analyses the pilot intervention by examining the literature and my own reflections on the process, comparing and contrasting these findings with those of Phase One. Chapter four gives a brief reflection on the role of the practitioner working with trauma-exposed young people, whilst the final chapter gives a conclusion to the report, critiquing the research as well as giving recommendations for future areas of research.

Ethical Considerations

This study is obviously sensitive in nature, as it involves not only children, but marginalised children. Ethical clearance was received from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand. Full school support was given by Three2Six School, (See Appendix A) and the grade teacher especially informed of the process, so that they could be sensitive should any issues from the group surface in a child's individual class life.

Informed consent was given by the children's parents (see Appendix C), and the group was completely voluntary, and subject to the children themselves giving informed assent (Appendix D). The children and parents were informed of both the reason for the research, its

aims, and the progress through the process both before and during the process, so that the group could affect the process at any point, should they have felt uncomfortable with the direction it was taking. The majority of the first session focused primarily on helping the children to understand the purpose of the research and their role within it, as well as the potential benefit of being a part of the sessions. The session was purposely set aside to give the children time to ask any questions they might have about why they had been chosen, and to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to continue with the group.

Hugman et al (2011) argues that informed consent (and assent) needs to be an ongoing and relational process, rather than a once off event. This research attempted to sustain this conversation directly with the learners, so that they could understand their role in the research and the implications thereof.

The population group was chosen specifically with the knowledge that the school could provide adequate social support for the students. The students will also have another eight months together at the school, which provides enough time for follow-up, debriefing and support post-intervention.

The refugee children have been specifically chosen to ensure that they have been in South Africa and at Three2Six School for at least a year, ensuring that they have settled somewhat into their South African school and community environments.

Chapter One

Phase One: Learning the Stories of Those Before Me.

Method

Data Collection

This stage took the form of a grounded theory study, in which informal interviews were conducted with three experienced and well-respected professionals working with refugees and asylum seekers. Informal interviews were appropriate in this context as they enabled an in depth discussion without restricting the topics to what my preconceived ideas of the professionals' experiences may have been. (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly 2006)

The aim of these interviews was to gain a broader understanding of the challenges of working with refugee young people in Johannesburg, as well as the thematic content and methodologies utilised by these diverse professionals, forming an exploratory basis for the pilot intervention in phase two. These interviews provided a context for the particular experience of young refugee people in Johannesburg, and their potential needs and challenges, and were prefixed by an informed consent process (see Appendix B).

The three interviewees were Tali Nates, the head of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, Samuel Khoza, the Social Assistance Coordinator at Jesuit Refugee Services, and Hayley Burman, Arts Therapist and Founder of the Arts Therapy Centre Lefika La Phodiso.

Data Analysis

This data was then subjected to a grounded theory analysis. In grounded theory analyses, “concepts, categories and themes are identified and developed while the research is being

conducted” (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005:266). Grounded theory allowed for myself as researcher to discover important themes and categories through the research, rather than entering with predetermined themes or ideas of what the research would uncover. Grounded Theory also allows for analysis to begin before the interviews are completed, allowing for questions in later interviews to be shaped by and test emerging hypotheses. Because the sample size was so small, it cannot be said that data saturation was reached, which is the point at which no new codes emerge from the data. However, given the relatively small size of the field itself, and the fact that all three interviews produced codes that complemented and strengthened each other, it is my opinion that adequate interviews were held to merit analysis. (Dent-Brown & Wang 2006)

The first step of data analysis involved open coding, or the process of identifying meanings, feelings and actions in the transcribed interviews and noting patterns and themes. Each text unit consisted of sentence or part thereof, with letters assigned to it to indicate its relevance to one or more categories, as shown in Table 1 below. Each category was named according to the thematic content of the code. 139 unique text units were identified during this process, contributing to 22 categories. Relationships between the categories were then identified, resulting in 4 category groups, 2 major, encompassing 18 and 13 of the categories respectively, and 2 minor groups, containing 8 categories each. These 4 category clusters were then grouped around a single overarching idea that informs the research. The analysis thus develops through field work, reading of the literature, and detailed reading of the interview transcripts. (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005)

Table 1: Example of Coding Text Units

Text Unit	Codes
40: If you can create a story, maybe write a story...	N
41: ... so maybe other stories will come out	N
42: ...you re-enact even, how do you feel and what do you want to say.	E, K, M, N, O
E: Psychosocial Support, K: Developing Important Skills, M: Self-Image, N: Telling/Disclosing, O: Emotions	

Grounded theory also makes space for the researcher to journal throughout the process, facilitating “thinking about, and beginning to write about, the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data” (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005: 273). In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of research, and as such it is essential for the researcher to acknowledge explicitly and reflect on their own values, assumptions, beliefs and biases. Journaling is one method of reflecting on and monitoring these issues throughout the study. (Mertens 2005)

The data collected and analysed in this phase is described below and presented alongside relevant literature in order to both support and at times question the findings.

Phase One Findings

The data was grouped into four distinct categories: Story versus Silence, Loss versus Meaning Making, Education, and Program Realities versus Changing Needs. All four of these groups revolved around the core category which I have entitled Creating Narrative from Chaos.

Program Realities versus Changing Needs

This category group explains some of the most practical and grassroots challenges faced by those working with refugees in Johannesburg, informed by categories such as Xenophobia, Institutional Barriers and Inadequacies and Material Barriers to Integration. NGO and Faith Based Organisations (FBO), receive funding primarily for newly-arrived asylum seekers and refugees, and employ a needs-based approach which deals practically with food, housing and legal challenges, as we see from comment A14, “ [For the] newly arrived, what are your needs, legal needs, food needs, home needs?” and C131, “...most of the psychological and social issues are left hanging.” There is a lack of capacity and resources for organisations to support refugees in the long-term, and the assumption appears to be that integration will have occurred once the refugees have been in the country for an extended period of time, which is not always true, as “being in the country for too long does not necessarily mean that you are integrated” (C135).

The result of this is that long term refugees receive little social or psychological support once they are judged as having been in the country long enough to be integrated. This has an adverse effect on refugee children, even those born in the host country, as “if you are saying that this person has been in the country about ten years, and so you are not going to help them with anything, that will also affect their kids” (C134). In reality, time has little to do with effective integration, and the needs of refugees shift as they spend more time in the host country. Unfortunately, the lack of long term support often means that refugee children, especially those born in the host country, receive little to no psycho-social support, as C130 tells us, “their parents will go to organisations and NGOs that offer those services, but the kids, nothing.”

These sentiments are echoed in the literature surrounding two main models of approaching refugee issues, the trauma model, and the psychosocial support model. Much research involving refugees and asylum seekers has historically taken a trauma model stance. This model tends to claim that, due to the extreme violence and upheaval that refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to, the primary pathology of concern is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The trauma model focusses on physiological symptomology, portraying the refugees as survivors who are in need of specialised care. This focus on trauma has had positive effects in that it has documented the extent and impact of some of the most terrible human rights abuses. However, it relies heavily on measurement instruments developed in the West, as well as potentially privileging Western models of health and wellbeing over indigenous models. (Schweitzer & Steel 2008)

As Watters (2008) argues, the prevalence of this trauma discourse internationally, “is symptomatic of a process of psychiatric imperialism that seeks to impose Western value systems, interests and treatments on populations in the developing world” (129). Watters (2008) further argues that this trauma discourse fails to engage refugees to discover what they themselves find important.

A more inclusive model is represented by a psychosocial approach to refugees and asylum seekers. Watters (2008) details that a psychosocial approach to programmes aimed at refugee young people must include a needs assessment based on subjective priorities gathered and defined by refugees themselves, rather than the trauma model’s PTSD focus. A psychosocially oriented intervention is based on identifying and strengthening the coping and resilience resources of refugee young people. Rather than focussing on the impact of war on a child’s mental health, an intervention should include a range of problems related to a child’s social relationships and emotional well-being. As Watters (2008) argues, “rather than

focussing on refugee pathology, a new paradigm should emerge in which refugees are seen instead as prototypes of resilience despite major losses and stressors” (131). (Watters 2008)

Education

A strong voice for education appeared in all of the interviews conducted. Education was argued to be one of the key determinants for refugee young people successfully integrating into the host community and going on to lead productive lives, seen in such comments as A76, “education is very, very important”, and A69, “those that are young and managed to go back to school and integrate with society, even with all the trauma and the loss and the nightmares, and so on, those that managed to integrate into school, their success was so much.” Education was also seen as an opportunity to change not only the student’s life, but potentially that of their family as well, especially in African cultures that encourage the children to work to support their families and elders, described in code C138, “[education] can even change the future of their parents” and A71, “for refugees, or for kids where their family came from trauma, or families that never had an education, for those kids to be the first that will have an education, the pride of education [is] very, very important.”

However, there are major barriers to accessing education. Financial challenges, lack of documentation, and xenophobic attitudes were all identified as major challenges for refugee families, further antagonised by parental unwillingness or inability to become involved in the school community because of language issues. Codes such as C125 capture this sentiment, “the parents’ participation into the school system also affects the integration of the kids into school.” The children were also seen as being exposed to potential prejudice from teachers who, uneducated about refugee issues, may antagonise refugee learners in and out of the classroom, as captured by C120, “some teachers will be able to tell kids, you are a refugee, go back home”.

These ideas are echoed in the literature, which describes that refugee young people who live with their parents may be at an educational disadvantage because of the lack of their parents' grasp of the host nation's language. Because of this, parents may be unable to assist in homework, engage with teachers and participate in school governance. Refugee young people are also often perceived as 'problem' children, ill-disciplined and prone to partake in illegal activities. This is a problem especially when children begin to 'live up to' these expectations. (Watters 2008)

The literature also gives us insight into the particular stressors potentially to be faced by both refugee and non-refugee learners when making the transition between primary and high school. Qualter et al (2007) gives the effects of transition to high school as being potentially negative on the learner's self-concept, with most learners experiencing a degree of depression or anxiety. They further state that bullying and aggression can increase as learners negotiate new social roles and issues of dominance. A successful transition, Qualter et al (2007) argues, relies heavily on the coping strategies available to individual learners.

Zanobini and Usai (2002) add that "a number of studies revealed that following transition from primary to low middle school, pupils immediately become more negative about school and about themselves, more anxious about their performance and less intrinsically motivated" (206). This may be in part caused by higher academic demands and the more performance-oriented space of middle school, which cause the learner to change how they judge their competence. Middle school certainly presents a greater emphasis on discipline and teacher control, and this environment can have a negative effect on motivation and self-determination. (Zanobini & Usai 2002) It is interesting to note here that a sense of agency and control over one's life is also important for young refugee people settling into a new society, which Clark (2005) argues, is essential in helping them "[regain] a sense of self-worth and purpose" (cited in Couch 2005:49).

Lucey and Reay (2000) give a more balanced view of the anxiety of this transitional phase. They argue that “[t]ransitions in individuals’ lives have always demanded emotional reorganisation, and in this internal landscape anxiety is for most not only an inevitable consequence of the transition but central to the development of effective coping strategies” (192). In this way, transitions are seen as necessary moments of growth and maturation, rather than merely potentially traumatic periods. Transitions to secondary school are marked by bringing focus to complex negotiations around masculinity and femininity, ethnicity, race, social class, and culture. Lucey and Reay (2000) describe the ‘anxious readiness’ with which most learners look towards secondary school, both fearing the loss of familiarity and friendships, as well as desiring the sense of ‘growing up’ and maturation. The centre of the transitional dilemma for learners appears to be how to “embrace the creative, positive possibilities of this change when there is so much to lose” (Lucey & Reay 2000:195). (Lucey & Reay 2000)

There was a strong argument in the interviews for building resilience and a love for education through the drama therapy as a way of ensuring children do not drop out of school post transition, as found in code A71, “somehow through the love of drama, love of acting, love of experiencing, encourage them to want to learn, to want to read, to want to explore, it would be amazing”, and A72, “if your drama therapy can instil pride for education, through somehow, that’s very important.”

Qualter et al (2007) argue for an Emotional Intelligence (EI) program for easing the transition from primary school for young people. EI is defined by Bar-On (1997) as “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (cited in Qualter et al 2007:81). EI is linked to less likelihood of missing school or engaging in alcohol and drug consumption,

which points to more positive coping mechanisms. Low EI is also linked with low self-esteem and poor impulse control. (Qualter et al 2007)

A program designed to ease the transition from primary school for refugee young people must take into account all of these issues. The literature and the interviews seem to point to the importance of building self-esteem and resilience, whilst giving space for young people to express both their anxieties and excitement around this transition. We can also not disregard the unique circumstances of the refugee young person, and the potential stressors that they face daily in addition to those faced by host nation young people.

Loss versus Meaning Making

This category grouping encompassed 13 of the 22 categories, including Trauma, Transforming Past Narratives, and Xenophobia. The UN 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, defines refugees as those people who,

are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence; and are unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for the reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and among other things, are not war criminals or people who have committed serious non-political crimes.

UN 1951, cited in Couch 2005.

The major theme coming from work with refugees during and after the 2008 xenophobic attacks in Gauteng was that of loss, particularly loss of a stable home environment, of family and of tangible memories such as those represented by family photographs and keepsakes. Codes B83, “we got a lot of images of houses and the wish really for a consistent space for a house, a home” and B84, “the refugee crisis was exacerbated by the violence so it was also

that sense of being violently othered, removed and excluded”, and A46, “what symbolises the biggest loss is loss of family, loss of home, the losses”, exemplify this. Beyond the trauma of the xenophobic attacks, refugee life is marked by a sense of displacement, confusion and low boundaries, a sense of a loss of normality that may never be regained. Trauma itself was described in the interviews as potentially causing memory loss and a dysfunctional ‘out of order’ way of life as in code A20, “many of them have posttraumatic stress disorder, they will not function in the best way possible.”

Refugees often have been exposed to considerable violence and persecution, experiencing intense levels of fear. They are often separated from family, and subjected to abuse, exploitation, rape, witnessing killings and extreme deprivation. On arriving in a country of resettlement, refugees often suffer the anxiety of worrying about the people they have left behind, as well as the difficulties of adapting to their new environment and the isolating effects of language barriers. (Couch 2005)

All of these experiences are confounded in the case of refugee young people who, Tuk (1997) argues, when “[in] a stage of life in which one normally needs protection, clear boundaries, understanding and space for experimenting, these refugee children experience the opposite” (cited in Watters 2008:142). Although there is no linear relationship between exposure to war and violence, and symptoms of anxiety, insecurity and depression, higher levels of psychological disturbance can be predicted by early separation from parents, direct exposure to acts of violence, and the death of family members. Children under the age of ten are three times more likely to develop symptoms of PTSD than adolescents, although the presence of a trusted adult or a community sharing a similar heritage and traditional background can ameliorate this risk. Success at school for refugee young people is associated with personal characteristics such as intelligence, dedication, language skills and persistence. A strong,

positive sense of personal identity and self-esteem is also associated with school achievement, social acceptance and peer relationships. (Ahearn et al 1999)

The prevailing idea from the interviews was that losses need to be acknowledged, (A49: “so to acknowledge the loss, it is lost forever”, but meaning must be made of life as it is now, what has not been lost and what has been learnt, A61: “acknowledging, but taking the positive out of that experience”, A62: so to make it the flipside of positive, so as a refugee, I learnt to be strong”). A possible focus suggested by the interviews for the drama therapeutic work was dreams and visions for the future, what being a refugee has given me (strength, resilience, etc), and a focus on the positives of the current situation (access to education, support structures, etc), as shown in A64, “and now take this bag and act, create your home or your grade 7 experience with these gifts from your experience.”

The literature appears to support this idea, as Tolfree (1996) argues that an effective method for providing psychosocial support for refugees must recognise that human beings have “capacities and personal resources to identify issues they need to work on, and to deal with these themselves. By avoiding the typical stereotype of the refugee as helpless and passive... by avoiding terms which label people as traumatised or pathological, the [project] works with [the children’s] strengths rather than their weaknesses” (119).

Psychoeducation was also identified in the interviews as a method of grounding and creating context for the drama therapeutic work, as well as a way of giving practical information that may be needed for the children to understand trauma or their emotions, (B107:

“psychoeducation can be very helpful before you move into therapeutic work just so that there’s context, like why am I here”). The short term intervention was also seen as an opportunity for remodelling endings for the children who may not have had the chance to experience closure in a positive and contained way (B99: “that there is a time to say goodbye

which they may not have had time to do when they moved”, B102: “this is an opportunity to say goodbye and end in a way that you didn’t have an opportunity to do or might not have”).

Story versus Silence

This category group warns against the silencing nature of labels and prescribing the content of the program before meeting the children themselves. It contains 18 of the possible 22 categories identified. By deciding concretely on a particular story or thematic content before entering the space, there is a danger that the children will not be allowed to share their current and most pressing stories, captured in code B90, “it’s having to return and not have the room to grow and elaborate and be where they are now and think about a kind of life that is about their own kind of current developing issues” and B93, “it’s not about transition and it’s not about the trauma of it because we don’t know.” There is also a danger in assuming that therapy is necessary, when it has not been asked for (B108: “we often assume that therapy is necessary”, B109: “how do we know that this is the model that’s helpful, maybe we should be teaching skills actually”).

Rather, the focus of the program should be symbolised by story, giving space and time for material to surface outside of prescribed themes, and working in a way that is collaborative and participatory (B110: more collaborative, participatory rather than imposed, you’ve got an agenda and you want to fulfil it”, B94: “give a space for the children to tell whatever story they need to tell”). By allowing the children a voice in the process to say that they are more than just the label of ‘refugee’, they are allowed to share the stories that they feel are important, rather than having an agenda imposed upon them (A67: “maybe a mind-mapping around I am a refugee, yes, or I am a woman, I am a girl, I am white, okay, but what else am I?”).

Although much of the literature focusses on programs for newly arrived refugee young people, it is still worth exploring here some of the methods that have been used by creative arts researchers, especially as they relate to the theme of story versus silence.

Rousseau et al (2005) documented their 12 week process with refugee children, designed to bridge the gap between home and school, allowing the children to make meaning from their migration experiences and improve their self-esteem. Through the use of story and myth work, Rousseau et al report that creative expression workshops seemed to have a positive effect on the children's self-esteem, and may help decrease emotional and behavioural problems. However, the researchers were very aware of the potential for a host country native therapist to become yet another disparate element in the already muddled world of the refugee child. (Rousseau et al 2005)

Another example of the creative arts in aiding refugee child resettlement is Baker and Jones' (2006) study involving music therapy for newly arrived refugee young people. The researchers found music effective in breaking through the isolating and silencing effects of resettlement, and providing a bridge between people of different cultural backgrounds, in this case, the researchers and the participants. Music therapy was found to reduce the severity of externalizing behaviours such as aggression, conduct problems, and hyperactivity, possibly by allowing for a positive channel for the children's anger and frustration. (Baker & Jones 2006)

Landis (2014) gives a drama therapeutic model for engaging newly arrived refugees in creativity and play. Creative Alternatives of New York (CANY), pioneered by Landis, holds three guiding principles. Firstly, metaphor is used as a therapeutic tool, dramatic fiction acting as a safe container for difficult and diverse feelings and experiences. Through engaging in the fictional, clients can discover and explore their creative energies and inner

worlds, “allowing them to rewrite their stories as people who can overcome and cope with real-life struggles” (Coles 1989, In Landis 2014:289)

Secondly, CANY uses the group as a therapeutic tool, building connections between clients. Building drama and stories is an effective process for generating commonality, interpersonal identification, and an environment of trust and trusting relationships. Finally, CANY believes that creativity is health, and their groups focus on health and transformation rather than pathology. This is especially important when working with refugees who have just arrived in the host country, as much of the trauma of the journey has yet to be expressed or worked through. (Landis 2014)

Creating Narrative from Chaos

All of these four category groups can, in my opinion, talk to the central theme of Creating Narrative from Chaos. Loss without making meaning, silence, the pressures of program realities and barriers to education all represent a kind of chaos that can mark the refugee life. When faced with the senseless violence and hate of xenophobia and war, it is difficult to find words for one’s experience, and trauma in itself, we know, is silencing. And so the work, perhaps, becomes about creating narrative, giving words, story, and meaning to an otherwise unpredictable life.

Creating narrative does not prescribe the story to be told, but rather allows for material to surface. Watts (1996) argues that the expression of feelings within the context of a story is a safe and creative way of learning to acknowledge, to contain, and choose to express these feelings differently in the future. Watts (1996) goes on to say that story and myth is a powerful and distanced container, where “very little need be said about one’s own life story, but the experience of playing, taking roles and sharing the process of the day, endows relationships with richness and empathy” (32).

Drama therapy also relies heavily on a sense of ritual, a collective storytelling. As Emunah (1994) argues, [r]ituals serve as a container for powerful and often untranslatable feelings, images, and unconscious associations that emerge during the therapeutic process” (22). In a transitional period marked by mixed feelings and anxieties, a ritual structure could provide a sense of containment needed to be able to express freely what previously had no words.

A drama therapy group can also help participants by allowing “clients to take on new roles in a safe environment and to expand a client’s personal and community-based role repertoire” (Landis 2014:291). In this manner, the new social roles and narratives required in secondary and high schools can be played out, tried on and experimented with before the learners make the transition in actuality.

Story making is by its nature participatory and collaborative, and thus reflects the ethos of drama therapy, becoming client led and client centred. Creating Narrative from Chaos thus serves as a useful core theme of the research, and a foundation for the program to be implemented in Phase Two. As such, a further research question to be considered in the implementation of Phase Two emerged from the data: How can the use of story be incorporated when working with refugee young people in a way that will ensure that their voices are heard and valued above that of the therapist and researcher?

There is, as has been discussed above, literature regarding the use of drama therapy in transitions, as well as the use of arts therapies with refugee populations, although there appears to be an absence of literature specifically detailing a drama therapy intervention for refugee young people transitioning from grade 6 to grade 7. The four category groups and the overarching theme identified in this phase of the research have attempted to begin to bridge this gap and better understand what such an intervention needs to address.

Chapter Two: The Roots of the Story Tree

Conceptual Framework

In order to design a relevant intervention for refugee young people transitioning between grade 6 and 7, it is important that we find an appropriate way of understanding how identity is constructed. Due to the potential reliance of this work on drama therapeutic ritual and story as modes for allowing refugee young people to explore different roles and aspects of their transitioning identities, it is useful for us to understand identity in terms of narrative and belonging.

Yuval-Davis (2006) views identities as “narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)” (202). These identity narratives, argues Yuval-Davis, are constantly in flux, and can explore not only the collective past, as through origin myths, but also help to explain the present, as well as give future trajectories (2006). Identity narratives also have a specific cultural or communal dimension, which allow the individual to connect to the collective, and to differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘other’ (Yuval-Davis 2001).

Yuval-Davis (2006) also argues that when individuals feel threatened and unsafe, such as after a declaration of war or a terrorist attack, the emotional components of their identity narratives become more central and pronounced. It is not difficult to see how this could be an effective way of understanding something of the refugee experience, due to the unsettled and often threatened nature of their living conditions, and their future prospects.

Viewing identity as a narrative also allows us to connect with the narrative nature of drama therapy myth work. Pearson (2013) talks of the power of collective storytelling and enactment in allowing each person to add “to the story according to his or her unique experience, memory and style, as together they move through the story in role” (43). She

goes on to describe how the simplicity of the narrative opens our imaginations, as the characters and scenes “chime with images and experiences that we all share. We may need to know if the king is rich or poor, the mountain accessible or made of glass, but mythic figures and landscapes have been with us since childhood, in stories and as lived experiences” (45).

It was Jung who observed the power of myths to enable us to engage with deep psychological concerns through playful adventures that can reverberate with our deep longings, ambitions and fears (Pearson 2013). This is echoed by Gersie and King who simply state, “[t]raditional tales express essential human experience. By allowing the myth to resonate within us, stimulating our personal expressive capabilities, we are enabled to learn to connect our personal experience to the experiences of the human race. We become active witnesses to the past – realizing our present – transforming our future” (1990:24).

Linking the ideas of drama therapeutic use of myth as a connection to self and the greater community, and that of identity as a dynamic narrative, we can begin to envisage how drama therapy can be an important tool in the therapy of refugee young people in transition.

Story in Drama Therapy: Sesame and Narradrama

If the drama therapy program is to centre around the creation of narrative, it is important to explore how narrative and story can function in the drama therapy space. In the Sesame method of drama therapy, the creative work with stories is carried out by the clients themselves, rather than the therapist. The therapist tells the story to the group in a pared down and simple manner, and the “details and inner dynamics of the story are left for the group to find in themselves, once they have entered it in role” (Pearson 2013:42). The Sesame method of working requires that the group is first warmed up with some physical activity which helps

to transition clients from their everyday life into readiness to enter the world of the story. It is this liminal space that allows for psychological changes to take place. (Pearson 2013)

The story is then told with the clients seated in the circle, the therapist telling the story with conviction and authority, coming from the deep, symbolic truths of story. Roles from the story are then offered to the group, who choose the role they feel they most resonate with in the moment. The story is then enacted, mostly in a non-verbal manner, using movement, gesture and sound, even basic musical instruments. These enactments are unique to the group, drawing on the collective imaginations and personalities of the group, each individual adding to the story in line with their unique experiences and memories. (Pearson 2013)

Jung argued that myths and fairytales engage with our deepest psychological concerns, allowing us to participate in a playful and distanced manner in stories that echo our strongest ambitions, fears, and longings. Mythological figures, according to Jung, give symbolic form to archetypal roles, and Pearson argues, “[w]hat begins as ‘Let’s pretend’ can quickly move into experiences that connect, however fleetingly, with as elusive ‘true self’, which is vulnerable and habitually hidden behind a mask or persona, the official and recognisable self that we present to the world” (2013:48). Thus, being in a role simultaneously protects and reveals parts of the self, creating a learning experience that invigorates rather than disciplines, inviting the client into the play and allowing them to draw their own conclusions and connections to real life. (Pearson 2013)

Landy (1994) echoes this sentiment, describing how “[c]haracters in a story can become objects of identification for a client. When telling, dramatizing, or listening to a story, the client who is properly distanced in relation to a character will be able to release emotion and recognize certain aspects of his life that are like those of the character” (165). Distancing is vital here, and the therapist should take note to properly provide adequate distance between

the client and the characters or themes in the story chosen. The story should also have a relatively simple plot and character definitions, as subplots and character complexity may confuse clients and potentially make identification difficult. This is part of the reason why myths and fairytales are so appropriate for drama therapy work, as their plots can be simplified without trivializing the deeper issues and themes inherent in the stories. (Landy 1994)

Another method of drama therapy that focuses on story is Narradrama, which is based on the premise that story shapes how we interpret life events, so “[a]s people become aware of different stories in their lives, they decide which stories to hold onto and build their lives on. Through the process of re-authoring, people reinvent their lives” (Dunne 2009). Although Narradrama focuses on the use of the client’s actual story, which is not necessarily appropriate for a short term intervention with a group of young refugees, the underlying beliefs of narradrama are useful to keep in mind. Narradrama functions to encourage the clients to take on different roles and dramatize alternatives to stories that the clients may have become stuck in. Narrative and story emphasise collaboration and respect between the client and the therapist, and the narradramatist must examine their own cultural beliefs and values in order to acknowledge any privilege that may marginalize the client’s voice. (Dunne 2009)

By being aware of the dominant culture and system, the therapist can be careful to not reinforce these, rather being flexible, collaborative, and open-minded, respecting the client’s needs and values until the client chooses to question them. Narradrama does not focus on pathology or dysfunction, instead using role-playing and improvisation to invite the client to a deeper understanding of their situation and the significant figures in their lives. The narradramatist must keep three goals in mind throughout the therapy: Fostering collaboration, letting curiosity take its course, and being gentle and invitational in approach. (Dunne 2009)

Storymaking, whether through enactment or other creative means, could provide a distanced, contained method for working in the short-term with refugee young people. The use of story allows the therapist to focus on relevant themes and characters brought into the space by the participants themselves, steering away from a purely trauma focussed model, and looking instead at the material that the participants consider relevant and appropriate. Using story, therefore, provides a useful method of trauma-informed intervention, in which the resilience and coping skills of the group are valued, whilst allowing for the experimentation and playing out of new roles and characters.

Against Prescription: Mooli Lahad's 6 Part Story Assessment

The data analysed in Phase One has clearly shown the silencing nature of prescribing the thematic content of the stories to be used in the therapeutic process. This offers the challenge of how to introduce narrative that does not assume the content to be worked with, but still gives enough structure to introduce participatory and collaborative storymaking. It is my opinion that Lahad and Ayalon's 6-Part Story Method (6PSM) would be an appropriate tool both for introducing storymaking and allowing the emergence of themes that are relevant for the participants. (Dent-Brown & Wang 2006)

The 6PSM leads the participants through six elements that together produce a story that can be told in the group and elaborated upon through discussion and questions from the therapist. The method asks the participant to choose a main character and situation that is as far away as possible to the reality of the participant. The method allows the participant to produce "fictional, third-person accounts which are a metaphor for, rather than an immediate description of actual events" (Dent-Brown & Wang 2006:317). This distancing is useful for the trauma-informed drama therapeutic process, should stories of past experiences or

potentially traumatic events arise. The 6PSM also allows for the therapist to assess each participants' coping mechanism, shown in how the participant's main character overcomes their obstacles, and what help they create for themselves. This is important if the therapy is to look at building resilience for the challenges to be faced in grade 7, as it gives the therapist an idea of how the children have been coping with challenges thus far.

The 6PSM is, in my opinion, an important entry into the therapy space, as it functions partly as a needs assessment, and also begins the narrative journey of the work itself. Far from prescribing narrative content, the 6PSM allows the participants to tell the stories that they feel are relevant, giving the therapist insight into useful thematic content for the therapy process moving forward.

Chapter Three

Phase Two: Sowing and Reaping

As the first term of 2015 began, I was ready to begin Phase Two, designed to be a seven week, fourteen hour pilot, taking place every Saturday morning at Three2Six. But the unthinkable forced a serious change in plans. On the 22nd of January, a fourteen year old boy was shot dead in Snake Park, Soweto, sparking days of xenophobic violence and the looting of foreign owned shops across Soweto. By 9:30 am on the 23rd of January, 81 foreign owned shops had been looted and gutted, with school children joining the violence. Foreigners living in parts of Soweto were told to leave, reminiscent of the 2008 xenophobic attacks and numerous smaller outbreaks of violence targeting foreigners since then. (Simelane & Nicolson 2015)

In light of this climate of fear and aggression, I decided to shift the timing of my sessions to integrate into the children's school day. The 2008 attacks had prompted Three2Six to provide transport for the children to and from school in a bid to provide a safe schooling experience. In my work with the Far-Fetched Project, where workshops were held over the weekend, I was asked to allow the children to come to school in 'civvies' rather than their school uniforms, as school children travelling outside of school times attract attention which could lead to the children being identified as foreigners. It was with this in mind that my two hour drama therapy weekend sessions became half hour lunch break sessions. Although this has been a difficult adjustment, I believe it is indicative of the nature of working with refugees in South Africa, constantly responding to the changing needs of a vulnerable population that is largely at the mercy of the host communities within which they find themselves.

Method

Phase Two of the research project involved running a pilot project with the grade 6 students of Three2Six School.

Sample

The sample consisted of ten grade 6 students at Three2Six School. The students were identified by the principal as having been at the school for at least one year. The five female and five male students were between the ages of ten and thirteen, and one student had been born in South Africa, whilst the others were born in either Zimbabwe or the Democratic Republic of Congo. Five of the students had been at Three2Six from the beginning of grade 5, whilst the others arrived at the school between grades 1 and 3. The level of English language proficiency of the students was identified as good.

Sessions

Seven half hour sessions were held once weekly in the first school term of 2015. As the sessions were held during the children's lunch break, they were encouraged to eat and drink during the work, so as to not disrupt the feeding scheme of the school, which in some cases provides the students with their only full meal of the day. The sessions were held under some trees on the school field as this was a consistent and quiet space that could be guaranteed weekly. As Three2Six uses the premises of another school, it can be difficult to find a consistent classroom space that will not be disturbed during the drama therapy session. Although working outdoors is not ideal, as the confidentiality of the space can become compromised with other students making use of the sports fields for social interactions and as a walkway, I decided that the fields provided enough of the seclusion and quiet required to conduct short drama therapy sessions.

The fields are also somewhat of a neutral ground, used by both schools, and as such, they represent a space that is neither ‘ours’ nor ‘theirs’. For such short sessions, the use of a space outside of the classroom quickly provided a way to show that the sessions were not part of school, and that my role was not that of teacher, nor was their role strictly that of student. Keeping in mind that the sessions were to centre around narrative and story, the outdoor setting seemed symbolically appropriate to me, for as Gersie and King (1990) relate, stories have historically been shared with “[g]roups of people [gathered] around a fire, listening as the storyteller shares tales which instruct, heal, entertain and mystify. The listeners and the storyteller participate in an experience which connects them to their family, tribe and nation, through past and present, towards the future” (23).

The sessions began with a needs assessment using Mooli Lahad’s 6PSM as described above, and continued using story and narrative as core methods of creating relationship with the students. A full description of each session is integrated into the analysis below.

After each session, I engaged in reflective journaling, and this journal text was subjected to a grounded theory analysis. This analysis was then reviewed in light of relevant literature, as well as contrasted against the findings of Phase One in order to create the foundation for further drama therapy work with this particular population in Johannesburg. As in Phase One, the analysis that follows is presented thematically rather than chronologically, in order to appropriately integrate the insights gained from the sessions.

Beginning the Sessions Together: An Analysis of the 6PSM Assessments

The majority of the first session was dedicated to a conversation around informed assent and answering any of the questions that the children may have regarding the sessions and the

research. Once I was satisfied that this had been appropriately covered whilst allowing space for the conversation to continue in following sessions, the remainder of the session focussed on starting the 6PSM as an assessment tool which was completed in session two. It was important for me to begin with the 6PSM as a way of ensuring that I could hear the children's stories before imposing my own thoughts and ideas into the space.

In the second session the children had time to share the stories that they had created with the rest of the group. This was a voluntary process and the children were not required to share their stories should they not feel comfortable. This session also gave me a chance to gather information from the group regarding their ages, nationalities and how long they had been at the school, within the context of a conversation around introducing ourselves. It was this process of beginning to tell stories together that I could begin to find the threads of what themes and issues may be useful for the group to cover in the remaining sessions. As this formed the assessment phase of the sessions, it is useful to consider the analysis of the group's 6PSM stories separately from the analysis of the sessions as a whole.

There are seven levels of assessment used in the 6PSM that can give the therapist insight into the world of the client at both a conscious and unconscious level. These levels of assessment can provide a guide for the therapist when deciding what material and thematic content would be appropriate and useful for the client or group. The 6PSM uses a psycholinguistic frame, "suggesting that people are 'storytelling animals' who build their stories according to the way in which they absorb information and transmit messages to the world in specific psycholinguistic idioms" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:123). The 6PSM defines these idioms according to the BASIC Ph modalities, standing for Belief, Affect, Social, Imaginative, Cognitive and Physical. By analysing these modalities, the assumption is that "the therapist might be able to observe the way that the self projects itself into reality in order to 'meet' the world" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:123). (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012)

The BASIC Ph modalities, on the first level of assessment, provide six possible ways of coping, giving insight into the client's coping style. These coping styles can be referred to as languages in which the client is fluent or struggling. In order to analyse the client's coping style, the therapist analyses the words and phrases according to the BASIC Ph ways of coping, and finds which styles are frequent, present or forgotten. The table below describes the overall BASIC Ph coping styles of the sample group. A minus (-) sign indicates conflict. The table contains only nine students, as one student was absent for the assessment sessions of the process. Students S1 to S5 are female and S6 to S9 are male.

From the table we can see that the predominant coping styles of the group are Cognitive and Physical. These coping strategies rely on the practical and the rational, and involve planning and performance. The S-/S ratio may mean that others are viewed as obstacles rather than support, and the fact that S- has a score of 8 may mean that others are quite often viewed in the negative. Belief, Affect and Imaginative all appear to be relatively forgotten languages for the group, and this points to creative arts therapy as an appropriate intervention in its ability to encourage creativity and affective expression, and build self-esteem. (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012)

Table 2: Analysis of Sample's Coping Styles

	B+	B-	A+	A-	S+	S-	I+	I-	C+	C-	Ph+	Ph-
S1	1					1			1		2	1
S2	1				1	1					4	
S3					1	1			3			
S4									2		1	
S5					1	1			2		1	
S6	1					1			1		3	
S7						1	3		1		1	1
S8						1	2		1			
S9	1		2			1			2		1	
Total	4	0	2	0	3	8	5	0	13	0	13	2

The second level of assessment focusses on the thematic. The therapist views the story as a whole and attempts to identify a central theme or a main issue permeating the narrative. The thematic content of the story gives the therapist insight into the issues the clients bring with them into the space. The major themes in the nine stories of the group are identified in the table below.

Here again we can see the negative view of others, who are often portrayed as more of a hinder than a help. We can also begin to see that the stories lack clarity in terms of goals and how to reach success. Often the conclusions of the stories are also unclear or undefined. There is also an interesting theme of helping oneself rather than relying on other people, as we can see particularly in S9 and S1. Economic and social achievements are seen as important goals, and are identified explicitly in all stories except S7 and S8.

Table 3: Analysis of Sample Thematic Content

Participant	Main Thematic Idea
S1	You want to be the best, the world can be a bad place but if you help yourself you can succeed.
S2	Success is important and depends on teamwork.
S3	You want to be beautiful. Other people may help you but they can also hinder you. What you want and if you get it are unclear.
S4	Economic gain is important. How you achieve that, what can help you and if you succeed are all unclear.
S5	Economic gain is important. You cannot tell the people who want to help you from the people who might make things difficult for you.
S6	Success depends on teamwork and it is important to be known and successful.
S7	The world involves friends and enemies. Conflict often involves physical fighting. Dreams and goals can seem unobtainable.
S8	Supernatural help is needed to attain dreams and goals and overcome enemies.
S9	The goal is love and I am a helper. Other people are bad and hurtful.

The third level of assessment is based on the assumption that a story is aimed at communicating something, and therefore “it can be inferred that many questions embedded in the story are related directly to the here and now (that is, to the therapeutic encounter) or to the issues the client wishes to explore” (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:124). The therapist works on this level to uncover questions that may be hidden in the story texts. Children in

particular tend to tell stories rather than directly ask questions that they feel adults may be reluctant to answer. (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012)

On looking carefully at the group's stories, I felt that the following questions may be implicit within the telling of the stories: How can I reach my dreams? How do I recognise who is good and who is bad? Do you (the therapist) believe that I can be successful in life? Can I trust you? How will everything turn out? Is there anyone who can help me?

The fourth level of assessment involves looking at conflicts. As this level attempts to access the unconscious processes of the client, it is important that the therapist not over-interpret what has been given in order to fit in with a preconceived idea of what the client may be experiencing. One method of guarding against such over-interpretation is to psycholinguistic approach to understanding the story. The therapist can look at the verbs and adverbs used by the client in the story, and contrast each of these with their opposite. In this way, "the opposite or hidden intention or conflict is uncovered" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:125).

With this list of opposites in hand, the therapist can then create a higher order of clusters that can be overarching conflicts affecting the client. (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012)

It is important to note here that the children are not English first language speakers. Although they had been identified as being proficient in English by both myself and their teachers, it was important for me to use clarifying questions to ensure that I could understand the students as much as possible, rather than basing my analysis simply on their specific verb choices.

The opposites apparent to me in the stories were those of succeed/fail, gain/lack, rich/poor, good/bad, and teamwork/solitude. The two clusters that are most appropriate in my opinion would be that of success versus failure and togetherness versus loneliness. There appears to be a preoccupation with acceptance or rejection, as seen in the 'linguaging' around team and

others. There is also an aspect of trust and belonging contained within the togetherness/loneliness cluster. Finally, there is a need to achieve and overcome which may be linked to a sense of self-doubt and a mistrust of others.

The fifth level of assessment involves the client's developmental stage, as emerging from the narrative and what we know about what the client should be experiencing at their level of development. This knowledge allows the therapist to prepare "for the pitfalls and dramatic reenactments that may challenge the therapist in this stage and to respond in ways that facilitate growth" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:126).

According to their age of between 10 and 13 years, the group straddles two of Erikson's developmental stages, that of industry versus inferiority and the more adolescent ego-identity versus role confusion. Industry versus inferiority is a stage that focuses on education and learning social skills. In this stage children may develop a feeling of competence, although if too much focus is placed on work, children may begin to equate self-worth with productivity. In ego-identity versus role confusion, adolescents can develop a coherent sense of self but if this stage is not successfully negotiated, adolescents may experience role confusion, or as Erikson termed it, an 'identity crisis'. (Landau & O'Hara 2011)

It is interesting to note that the conflicts arising out of the stories predominantly deal with achievement or failure, and social behaviour versus loneliness. These conflicts are appropriate for the children's developmental stages that are beginning to ask more of them in both a social and work arena. The preoccupation with acceptance and rejection as well as success and failure may mean that the children are still very much grappling with the conflicts of their developmental stages, and it would therefore be wise to prepare for thematic content involving social and work related struggles.

The sixth level of assessment looks at the story in terms of the hero's journey and the quest for the individual for individuation. Jung argued that the foremost of the archetypes is the hero, who can be described as a "person who overcomes great difficulty in order to realize his or her own destiny" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:126). The hero is the role model that urges us towards our own goals. In this way, looking at the hero's journey in the 6PSM stories allows the therapist insight into the client's own quest, allowing them to bring support, challenge or help discover new options. The therapist can also identify whether the hero is active or passive in relation to the other characters in the story, which points to the client's general attitude to life.

This analysis can be carried out by not only analysing the journey of the protagonist towards (or away from) their goal, but also analysing the roles within the story. Landy's taxonomy of roles gives a useful tool to identify the roles in the story, and these give an important insight into how the client is managing the roles in their own lives. According to Landy (1994), "emotional well-being depends on an individual's capacity to manage a complex and often contradictory set of roles" (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012:127).

In the students' stories, there was often a lack of conclusion, and little clarity to the identity or even existence of a guide figure. The obstacles standing in the way of the hero were also often underdeveloped, giving the sense that the hero had a goal, but no way of reaching it. Roles that were well developed in the stories included that of the helper (moral, unselfish, supportive), the father (masculine, strong, loyal, protective), the son (respectful, loyal, striving to emulate father), and the Superman (striving for perfection, inquisitive, restless, assertive and creative). Superman is a particularly interesting role as it represents the active search for ultimate knowledge and power, pushing beyond psychological limits. I would argue that the appearance of so many soccer players as main characters (five in all) is pointing to the role of the superman, one who, in pushing their body and mind to be the best

in their sport, transcends their circumstance and gains fame and fortune as a national icon.
(Landy 1993)

The final level of assessment is that of analysing the symbols presented in the stories. Symbols are representative of something unknown and therefore can carry many different meanings. It is therefore useful to look at the presented symbols in a broad light in order to begin to explore them as a representation of the inner issues of the client. (Lahad & Dent-Brown 2012)

The symbols presented in the stories are varied and originate from both the natural and built world. The tree can represent growth, reach and rooted sturdiness, meeting every season and holding its ground. The flower is a representation of spring and renewal, resilience and beauty. The ocean can represent the unconscious, cleansing, the unknown, rejuvenation and chaos. Fish can show innocence, the unconscious psyche and the invisible, whilst a dolphin can symbolise joy, freedom and support. Cats can represent agility, nobility, strength and aggression. A major recurring symbol is that of play, shown through the idea of soccer and sport. Play can represent the dynamics between exclusion and integration, separation and reunification. Play is simultaneously frivolous and serious, and holds within it winning, losing, pleasure and distress. (Martin 2010)

Group Formulation

The group's coping styles rely heavily on the physical and cognitive, with a strong view that other people may be dangerous. There is a focus thematically on success and achievement, without clear transitions between the goal and practical steps towards success. There is a need to look carefully at questions around trust, success and goals, and a focus on the conflict between success and failure and togetherness and loneliness. The group show clear indications that they are in the midst of their developmentally appropriate struggle between

industry and inferiority. There is a lack of the guide role as well as clear obstacles and conclusions in the stories, and an emphasis on the superhero role as helper and at times protagonist. The symbols contained in the story are varied and must be held in mind when choosing stories for the group to explore further.

Phase Two Findings

The analysis of the data gathered in Phase Two has been arrived at through similar means as that of Phase One. The reflective journal text was subjected to a grounded theory analysis and the data coded as described in Phase One. 72 unique text units were coded from the journal, contributing to 21 categories. These categories were then collected into three groups, namely, Me within the World (10 categories), The Role of Drama Therapy (7 categories), and The Unknown (6 categories). The category groups were gathered under a single over-arching theme which I entitled My Story within the Chaos. An example of the coding process is given in the table below.

Table 4: Example of Phase Two Coding Text Units

Text Unit	Codes
J6: Children seemed reluctant to be creative/'get it wrong'?	7,17
J7: So difficult with such a short time! How to really build relationship?	5,21
J8: This may be a fast-paced, spontaneous, play space	15
5:Challenge, 7: Self-esteem, 15: Play, 17: Authority, 21: Lack	

The analysis below encompasses relevant literature, the journal data, and examples from the sessions themselves. The analysis compares and contrasts these new findings with those of

Phase One to critique the pilot program and offer areas of weakness and strength within the session design.

Me within the World

This category group encompassed the social categories of gender, family, roles, self-esteem, group dynamics, agency, authority, friendship, attachment and lack. The largest categories within this group are those of roles and group dynamics, with 19 text units each, and self-esteem, which contained 15 text units. This grouping is closely related to the Phase One grouping of Story versus Silence, as both carry social and individual elements, and the idea of the importance of creating opportunities for story and narrative.

Me within the world was a category group that occurred across the sessions, looking specifically at how the children see themselves, how they relate to others around them, and how those that they meet and interact with impact their daily lives. Within this, I reflected on the roles that I saw the children taking, and what these could possibly mean. Haen and Brannon (2002) reflect on the fact that, “[f]or drama therapists, the roles that group members play serve as clues to the interior emotional landscape of the individuals, as well as the dynamics of the group as a whole” (32).

Many of the roles chosen by the children were gender specific, as in J1, “All the boys drew about soccer, wanting to be a soccer star”, and J3, “Girls chose beautiful objects: Flowers, wedding cake”, both referring to choices made by the group in their 6PSM drawings.

Soccer players, and professional athletes in general, are considered to be transitional heroes, fulfilling a developmental need (Goethals & Allison 2012). The National soccer hero is an interesting role for the children to have chosen. National soccer stars are lauded by their home countries, becoming the representation of the hopes and dreams of a nation. They are

powerful and loved, the ultimate symbol of belonging. The soccer star is not born into affluence or fame, but can originate from the most humble of beginnings. In fact, the soccer star could represent Joseph Campbell's (1949) traditional hero, coming from difficult circumstances, having to work hard to overcome early setbacks, receiving help, triumphing over adversity, and returning to his home as a national hero. It is little wonder that the children would identify with such a figure. As Goethals and Allison argue,

As with all archetypes, the hero archetype reflects millions of years of evolution during which humans and their ancestors struggled on many levels, including areas of survival, subsistence, and reproduction. We identify with struggle precisely because we *know* struggle, both first-hand at the level of personal experience, and also at the deeper archetypal level. (2012:213)

In session four, aware that there was a growing sense of trust and relationship in the group, and being able to carefully identify thematic content from previous weeks through my journaling, I brought in a story. The story focused on the themes of agency, loss, gain, choice and family. This story was told by myself, and then enacted by the group. After this we were able to have a discussion on the characters and events in the story, and what could have been done differently to ensure the most positive outcome for all.

It was interesting to see the roles taken on by the group in enacting the story. The two most played characters were that of the protagonist and the antagonist, the former a woodcutter, the latter a greedy and thieving neighbour. In the story the neighbour has a change of heart and ultimately redeems himself somewhat, as I reflected in J32, "The greedy neighbour's appeal was mostly that he was redeemable – had a change of heart...although there was debate regarding his motives for this change."

Both of these roles were taken on with fervour, and consequently discussed as binaries to each other. The protagonist was described as the poorest of the poor, completely in need, who

was “undeniably good for showing gratitude and staying to look after his family” (J34). The antagonist, on the other hand was labelled as bad, and given the advice of “stop stealing, go get a job, and ask if you need food!” (J33). This is especially interesting to note, after the group’s 6PSM assessments showed such faceless enemies and such a lack of transitions. Perhaps we see here again that the children have a clear idea of the ‘right answer’ and how they wish things to be, but little ability to find their way towards this. I also believe that this shows the children’s beliefs (people are either good or bad, and easily identifiable as such) and the realities of their daily lives, shown by the negative social score on their 6PSM assessments.

Such reductive stories where the ‘baddies’ are very bad and the ‘good guys’ are purely good, can also serve as “a comfort from the unexplained world [children] live in, in which adults can possess an unpredictable hero-villain duality” (Haen & Brannon 2002:34). In this way children are able to order their world and reduce some of the ambiguity inherent in their lives. (Haen & Brannon 2002)

The post-story discussion gave insight into the children’s view of personal agency. Although most of the children believed that the woodcutter could not have lifted himself out of poverty without the help of a supernatural power, one of the children thought differently. The reflection of the lone child that “He could have bettered himself without the fairy, by selling fruit and wood, not only the wood” (J36), was met with agreement, but I do wonder whether the group truly believes that poverty and difficulty can be fought against actively, without waiting for a magic fairy, or whether their challenges seem insurmountable. Certainly Haen and Brannon (2002) argue that children who have been maltreated often tend to view the world as all powerful, and themselves with little power or autonomy. This could perhaps link with the role of the guide in the 6PSM assessments, where helpers were either completely absent, or embodied by the main character.

Turning to the theme of self-esteem, the fact that the group seemed to aim towards economic affluence, fame and beauty, but appeared to lack the agency to achieve these goals, appears to point to the children seeing themselves as passive receivers of what life has given them, as opposed to active makers of their future. However, it is dangerous to consider this lack of agency as a pathological or trauma-induced aspect of the students' personalities, without considering first how their stage of development may be impacting their identity formation. Emunah (1995) speaks about adolescence as a tumultuous period for the individual, where "an onslaught of changes revolutionizes the adolescent's sense of identity and challenges the adolescent with multi-level developmental tasks" (150). This, combined with the fact that unresolved conflicts from earlier developmental stages can emerge in adolescence, could help to explain some of the difficulty the group is facing with regards to agency and self-esteem.

It is interesting to note that adolescents are quickly developing more abstract and introspective thinking, and that this "heightened consciousness leads to contemplation of future scenarios and possibilities, consequences of past actions, hopes and ideals, and finally to existential dilemmas and moral choices" (Emunah 1995:152). Perhaps, then, it is little wonder that the group showed such an interest in future goals and dreams, but still appeared to lack the ability to create their way towards these abstract ideals.

Despite this possible lack of agency, the group members often appeared confident and eager to engage in the drama therapy space. However, conversations and enactments about bullying did arise, as reflected on in J51, "Both name-calling (based on physical appearance and lack of intelligence) and physical fighting was present" and J56 "most of the group either chose to physically fight back [against bullies], or internalise these taunts, reporting feeling 'bad'."

Authority figures were not seen as consistently reliable in the fight against bullying (J52: "The teacher was seemingly impotent to stop the fighting", and J57: "Sometimes talking to

the teacher helped, sometimes not”). Friends were seen as protective factors against both bullying and the loneliness that accompanies being in a new school, as shown in J58, “Friendship was seen as a protection and we spoke of how, when arriving at Three2Six, they knew no one and stayed quiet for a long time until they found friends.”

Much of the group dynamics were cooperative and energetic, (J42: “Much more energy and playfulness in the group- are we building trust?”), however there were also moments of shyness and withholding. This was most apparent in session three which aimed to encourage the children to become more embodied in the space, and began with simple energising theatre games and grew towards storytelling. The creation of stories was ‘scaffolded’ by the use of story dice. These dice have a different picture on each side, and can be rolled in groups, giving a framework for the story to be told. The children were put into small groups and given time to tell stories to each other, before coming together to tell a big group story. This story was created by giving each person a chance to roll a dice and add a sentence to the story.

At points in the process, the group seemed reticent, or perhaps unable, to fully engage with the story telling process. For example, in the smaller groups, the children appeared reluctant to share their story dice stories with me, as we see in J25, “the small groups seemed to tell short, three sentence stories, and giggled when questioned further”. Later in the process, the children also seemed to battle with the challenge of telling a story together, “they struggled to create a story together- listening/attention/shyness?”(J26). Perhaps in an echo of their 6PSM assessments, the transitions and endings of the stories shared lacked in depth and consideration.

I do believe, however, that the children’s willingness to take on the roles of the stories offered, as reflected in J40, “The children were keen to act again, and to take on a different

role”, and enact with vigour, as in J37, “The enactment was enthusiastic and mobile, with lots of prompting from the side-lines”, are good indicators that drama therapy is an appropriate medium for this population. The children responded well to the medium of drama and story, and were enthusiastic in their involvement in the process. The drama therapy space can provide an important rehearsal space for young people facing transitions, as when “playing hypothetical scenarios involving conflict and decision-making, or scenes involving future roles, the adolescents evolving capacity to confront ethical dilemmas and to envision future possibilities is exercised and supported” (Emunah 1995:160).

The Role of Drama Therapy

This category group encompassed the seven categories of ritual, roles, transference, time, story, play, and the drama-life connection. All of these categories relate to concepts within the drama therapy modality, and this category group therefore reflects how the group responded to the drama therapeutic work and where the strengths and weaknesses of the work lie. This category grouping was not present as a separate entity in Phase One, which is understandable due to the fact that the interviews conducted in Phase One did not include a drama therapist. However, the closest related grouping would be that of Story versus Silence, as it involved the drama therapeutic ideas of story, role and the therapeutic relationship.

As one of the largest categories covered in this group, and an emphasis of Phase One of this research, story is an important aspect to cover in detail. Schwartz and Melzak (2005) argue that stories and storymaking form an intrinsic part of our nature, fulfilling our human need to make sense of reality. Storytelling is also an act of creating trust and relationship between the teller and the listener as,

The relationship between the listener and the teller resonates with past relationships in the internal representational world of both. The storyteller will invest passion and love in the

telling. By turning to imagination and feelings, the storyteller becomes vulnerable to the listener and in the subsequent contact the two will initiate a process of bonding. (Schwartz & Melzak 2005:297)

In general, the group responded well to the language of stories, and were quick to engage with stories when given the chance, whether it was to listen, enact, or create original pieces (J24: “The children responded well to the language of stories- princesses, monsters, and heroes appeared naturally”). We have already covered the story of the woodcutter and the greedy neighbour in the previous section, but there was another moment of significance with regards to story which occurred in session five.

This session began with a recap of the previous story enactment session and the topics that had arisen thereafter. The students were then given the chance to create their own short plays to show to the group. Scenework is a natural progression from the more structured story enactment. As Emunah (1994) describes,

[d]iverse scenes and roles afford clients the opportunity to experience and exhibit new sides of themselves. The ‘stepping outside of oneself’ and into a role is freeing; it provides relief and release from the constraints, both internally and externally induced, that are experienced in everyday life. Within the dramatic context, latent aspects of self can emerge and suppressed emotions can be expressed. (37)

What emerged from these plays is fascinating in terms of both thematic content and the discussions that followed. The boy’s play was fantastical in nature, with the boys choosing “to be superheroes, who, after one called the others names, all descend into a complex and protracted fight scene ending with one clear winner” (J53). When questioned about what happened after the play ended, the consensus was that revenge would be plotted and served, starting the fight again the next day.

Emunah (1995) reminds us that scenes enacted in the drama therapy space need not be replays of the group's real life scenarios and experiences in order to give the therapist an insight into the lives of the group members. So, even when looking at a superhero fight scene, it is good to take into account that the "degree of distance between self and product during adolescence tends to be minimal" (Emunah 1995:156). Likewise, Schwartz and Melzak state that the 'storyteller relives his/her own characters, settings and plots while recounting even the most far-fetched tales" (298). Haen and Brannon (2002) also provide useful guidance here, arguing that the themes of danger and competition are frequently found in the play of boys, whilst "young men ages 5 through 8 exhibit six times more pretend aggression than young women of the same age" (37).

The girls, however, produced a completely different piece of work, more grounded in reality and dealing quite directly with the issue of bullying, "the girls' play was about bullying at school, where one girl got bullied and fought back but her homework was torn up" (J50). Their view of the following day was similarly fatalistic and cyclical, involving increasing bullying with no end in sight, and although there was little physical aggression in their enactment, the emotional toll the bullying took on the main character was evident. On viewing this piece of drama, I felt that it was important to encourage the group to make the connection between what had been shown in the space and the realities of school life, and for us to look together at the issue of bullying. It was this dynamic discussion, that grew towards the idea that bullying is at its worst when you are faced by a new environment, new people, or a new school, that enabled me to first broach the topic of the transition from Three2Six to other schools for grade 7.

My enquiries into the group's feelings towards this transition was mixed, as shown in my reflections on the discussion, "I was met by scrunched up faces and loud sighs...the worries expressed involved leaving friends (though they can still be visited, but what if I move far?),

bullies, and fitting in” (J58), and, “there were concerns over how much homework would be given and how long the school hours would be” (J59). Some of the group shared horror stories from siblings’ experiences, and there was a desire to stay at Three2Six, or at least to be accepted into the host school for grade 7, as the next best alternative.

This also serves as a wonderful example of the group making the life-drama connection. Phil Jones (1996) argues that there are times in the drama therapy space when clients make a conscious choice to make a life-drama connection. Creating a bullying scenario grounded in roles that the girls play in real life at school may have been a conscious choice for the girls’ group, and it paved a way for discussions around the group’s struggles with these issues in particular. At other times, for example, when the boys chose to be superheroes, the life-drama connection may be unintentional, arising from a spontaneous enactment. My use of a story in the fourth session was also a deliberate choice not to immediately link the drama with the lives of the group, rather letting them find their own connections in the enactment and the ensuing discussion. (Jones 1996)

It could be argued that the definite shift towards a direct life-drama connection by the girls’ group is indicative of the growing trust and sense of safety in the group, allowing them the freedom to address directly the issues that were important for them at that moment. In drama therapy, actively creating a sense of safety and containment is considered essential for the growth of trust. I chose to use ritual as a way of bringing containment for the group, and it is appropriate here to explore this element of drama therapeutic work further, and how it has impacted the functioning of the group.

Ritual can be described as a rule-bound, fixed, set of actions (Jones 1996), and in the case of the sessions, a ritual space was set up through the journey together from the classroom to the drama therapy space and back. This journey together involved myself as the ritual leader

coming to fetch the group and leading them into the space, which being outdoors, was markedly different to the classroom space of the everyday. Once the drama therapy work was completed for the day, I again led the group back through the same path, from therapy space to the everyday school space, leaving them at their classroom, ready to re-join their class. As this ritual is repeated each week, it becomes a shared activity, where the group knows what to expect and within which the group can find their role. It is this consistency that allows the group to feel comfortable enough to share and trust within the boundaries of the ritual.

An example of this would be the important conversations that members of the group have shared with me whilst journeying to and from the space. The first mention of personal story and family came on the journey from session two, when some members of the group who were more quiet in the session, shared about their family situations, “then, on the walk out, they shared about brothers and sisters and family” (J13). It is also on the journeys that the group asks personal questions about me, as we transition between therapist-client and visitor-student, “on the way back I was asked questions about if I have a car” (J41). It is interesting that as we draw closer to getting back to everyday life that the children find the need to ask me personal questions, perhaps trying to place me in the outside, everyday world.

Play also became an important part of the ritual of our group. In session four, as we arrived at the space, the boys having arrived seconds earlier than the girls, an impromptu game of soccer developed in the space. The ball, completely imaginary, was passed skilfully from boy to boy, and heroic dives were made to ensure that it stayed in play. As this sense of play and spontaneity would be important for the story enactment to come in the session, I joined in the game, calling for the ball, catching it and sitting on it, promising its return at the end of the session. In acknowledging the importance and reality of their play, the spirit of imagination and creativity could survive within the structure of the session, fuelling the enactment.

Dramatic imagination and play is seen by Jennings (1995) to be “crucial for survival, as without it we would not be able to imagine how things might be or how they could be” (98). Dramatic play can serve as a space where choices can be tried out and roles experimented with before we must integrate these into our lives. It is vital that play is honoured in the drama therapy space, as without it there can be little chance of experimentation or risk-taking in the group. (Jennings 1995)

At the end of session six, the group experienced a break in ritual. This session was the first of our two closing sessions, and I attempted to leave the children with something tangible to take from the sessions that could help them as they move forward through the year. The group chose from a number of gift bags and materials, and I asked them to begin to decorate the bags inside and out with whatever they think they will need for the year ahead, whether it is a tangible object, a personality trait, or anything in between. At the end of the session we were half way through the bag making, which I had anticipated. However, I had not anticipated that the craft glue that had been used would still be wet to the point that the bags could not be carried vertically or on top of each other as I had hoped. And so, in a break from ritual, I asked the children to walk themselves back to class.

This was an important milestone of change in the life of the group, as the children were not only left to lead themselves, guideless, back to their classroom, but they were also being asked to leave their half-made gift bags and trust that I would bring them back intact and unblemished. As I reflected, “There was a tangible reluctance to leave” (J69), and “The boys especially took extra care, [saying], ‘I will just kiss my bag goodbye one last time’, they hid their bags behind the others, made sure I wouldn’t look inside and watched me handle them carefully” (J70). Eventually the group left for class, a full five minutes later than I had hoped, for the first time being late to class after a drama therapy session. It could be argued that it is appropriate that the ritual of the sessions shift as we moved towards the end of the sessions,

helping the group acknowledge that they are their own guides and helpers. However, this kind of shift needed to be better prepared for, and not the result of a mistake in planning. The impact of this aspect of the group's experience was clearly shown as the first words spoken to me in the final session were "Monique, is my bag safe?"

There is more to the bag story than just a break in ritual, however. The bag making session was the first time that I had brought materials into the space other than the story dice. The gift bags and the bag full of materials and stationary that I brought with me created an interesting situation for the group. As I reflected later, "There was a scuffle over the resources and lots of hoarding behaviour- the children did not share naturally and it was difficult to get their attention or be sure they understood the task" (J66).

At first reflection I thought that I had made a mistake in not building the children up to seeing the masses of materials in the space, and that I had overwhelmed them, which could be true to some extent. However, it is important for me to share my feelings during the session as I believe they have value from a counter-transference perspective. I use the term countertransference here to describe feelings that I, as the therapist, had towards my clients, which may be evoked by the clients or stirred up by irrelevant details of the client, by a prior client, or by other factors that are unrelated to the current therapy. It is vital when attempting to analyse counter-transference feelings, for the therapist to be able to separate the possible sources of the feelings, so that the most relevant material can be identified. (Reidbord 2010)

Counter-transference feelings that are uncharacteristic of the therapist are helpful to notice and analyse, as these feelings can give an insight into subtle dynamics in the client or client group. As I watched the group struggle to negotiate the resources, "my feelings were of 'hey, they're taking all my stuff', I won't be taking anything home', they can't take ALL of it', why did I let them take it all?' Perhaps I was picking up on the fight over scarce resources

and the want to keep anything possible that is beautiful, scarce, or could be called only ‘mine’” (J68). (Reidbord 2010)

These feelings were especially important as they were not congruent with how I had planned the session. I had packed materials specifically with the sense that the group could really make use of them, and had saved for weeks specifically with this in mind. It is therefore my opinion that these feelings are counter-transference, myself as therapist picking up on the unexpressed feelings of the group, a gift of insight into what may be going on for the children. With the children already having identified their goals as economic affluence, fame, material gain and the like, it is no leap of logic to understand something of the lack that they experience. Aaron (2013) perfectly captures this sense of awareness around lack and privilege, stating that “one cannot live in South Africa and not feel shame and not be vulnerable to dissociating” (146), especially when faced with some of the highest levels of inequality in the world. When the group was faced with limited resources and asked to choose what they need, perhaps their first and only response was ‘everything’.

This idea was especially poignant in the last session, when on completing the gift bags, the boys engaged in play that centred around taking and hiding the stationary provided for the group to use, and then calling each other out on the behaviour and forcing each other to give back what they had taken. Each boy took the role of the conscience of the group, making a show of identifying the thief, whilst fighting against admitting that he, too, was playing the thief role. This play was not engaged in by the girls, who remained the morally righteous audience to the action, proclaiming judgement and disapproval. By the end of the session I found that half of the stationary had not been returned. I experienced a huge sense of disappointment at this, as my first response was “this unnecessary behaviour is part of the reason that more practitioners do not wish to engage with refugees!” (J72).

However, on reflection I hold two hypotheses about this incident in mind. The first is a question of the boundaries that the children are able to hold (or not). In such a boundary-less and transient world, it is not difficult to see how refugee children find it difficult to act within the rules of the spaces they find themselves in. Conversely, they may actively rebel against seemingly arbitrary rules as an act of agency and control in a world in which they find themselves powerless. My second hypothesis is that the children might have taken the stationary in an attempt to carry part of the drama therapy sessions with them into their lives moving forward. The task had asked the students to capture what it is that they would need for their year ahead, and perhaps it is then appropriate that they choose to take part of the sessions that had so quickly come to an end.

The Unknown

The final category group contains the categories incomplete, challenge, change, difference, the future and lack. This grouping deals with the idea of the unknown both in terms of the future and the everyday, whether in school or social life. This grouping corresponds closely with that of Loss versus Meaning-Making in Phase One, although the former is far more future focused.

The idea of change is a large part of the unknown for this group. Even the idea of change and ending that marks the last sessions is prominent in the conversations of the group (J64: "...they expressed sadness at hearing we have only two more sessions and a wish to have me visit again at the end of the year to check in", J72: "One boy said to another, 'I hope Monique comes back next term'"). Change and the future also come into play when thinking about the transition out of Three2Six, and it is indicative of the group's nervousness that their best option would be to be accepted at the host school and be as close as possible to the known entity of Three2Six. The fact that the group struggled with their transitions and endings in

their 6PSM assessments could also be a clue to their apparent fear of change and the unknown, as they can identify their goals, but not how to achieve them.

Emunah (1995) argues that all life transitions or upheavals have the potential to cause either disturbance or personal growth. The transition from Three2Six could also represent a shift towards greater independence as the group begins their journey into middle and high school. However, this independence “is fraught with ambivalence: independence implies not only freedom but responsibility and loss – responsibility for decision-making and loss of the protection of high school” (Emunah 1995:152). For the children of Three2Six this loss is especially tangible as the move away from the protective space of their dedicated refugee school.

The idea of the unknown encompasses the challenge of working with others, and echoes the 6PSM’s ‘faceless enemy’, where any new person could be a threat or a help and there is little way of knowing before letting them get close enough to hurt you. Another aspect of the unknown that emerged was just how much uncertainty is present in the group’s everyday life. Some expressed how little they know even about their own family, “many come from big families, some do not know all their half-siblings, big age gaps” (J14). Sengun (2001) offers an important viewpoint here in particular for the refugee child,

Migration calls for a transition between outer and inner security in the way that an immigrant can no longer rely on the security provided by belonging and shared assumptions. He has to develop an inner security, a feeling of solidity, not only in order to cope with the ‘new everything’ but also to be able to go through the regressions, separation and integration. (76)

Here Sengun (2001) argues for the value of group therapy, which can offer a connection with others, as well as a sense of continuity and a feeling of security for the group members.

There is no doubt that not all change is devastating for the group, however, as our discussion around their move to different schools for grade 7 involved the vehement conclusion that although bullying may occur, they will each find friends and their own role in the new class. In the face of the unknown and inevitable change, the group is ultimately resilient and positive that they will make it through whatever comes. As Emunah (1995) reminds us, “adolescence is not an affliction but a ‘normative crisis’, that is, a normal phase characterized by increased conflict and fluctuation in ego-strength, and yet also a high growth potential” (153).

Chapter Four

The Giving Tree: A Practitioner's Perspective

There is a great deal of literature warning healthcare and support workers that work with victims of trauma to expect to encounter compassion fatigue and that working with refugees in particular can “foster feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, impotence and fear” (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch 2013:90). Clinicians stand the risk of experiencing vicarious traumatisation from consistent contact with traumatic material, even when they are highly trained and qualified to work in such a context. (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch 2013)

It was my experience when working with the Far-Fetched Project that leading a focused refugee group can be an incredibly intense and destabilising experience. In the weeks that I lead the group of refugee young people, I became gradually more homesick, and I struggled to maintain healthy relationships with those closest to me as I felt anxious and, at times, hopeless. Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch (2013) note that the effects of vicarious trauma can include strong emotional reactions and a disruption of beliefs about self, others and the world. At the time, however, I considered these feelings to be part of the counter-transference of the group, and I sought personal therapy in order to process my own feelings around displacement, homelessness and depression.

However, working with the children from Three2Six school for a second time has been a far more positive and enriching experience. Perhaps due to the fact that I had processed my own feelings in therapy prior to re-entering the space, and that I had a better idea of the intensity of the space itself, I found myself experiencing vastly different emotions. Although in my personal life I was experiencing great changes, including moving house and changing jobs,

both highly stressful events, I found myself incredibly encouraged by the resilience and positivity of the children.

Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch (2013) provide a possible explanation for this shift in my perception of working with refugee children. As opposed to the diagnosis of PTSD, there is also evidence of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), which is defined as a positive change following an engagement with potentially traumatic circumstances. PTG can involve greater psychological and cognitive development, emotional adjustment and increased life awareness. Just as trauma may be experienced vicariously, so to PTG. (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch 2013)

PTG commonly occurs in three areas, those of self-perception, interpersonal relationships and life philosophy. Growth takes place when the traumatic experience, whether directly or vicariously experienced, is infused with meaning. Workers in the fields of trauma-related work “have reported important work-related benefits or rewards including gains in relationship skills, increased appreciation for the resilience of people, satisfaction from observing growth, and being part of the healing process” (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch 2013:91). Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch (2013) also argue that clinicians may feel a sense of privilege at working with such vulnerable and important stories, and this is certainly what I felt at being allowed into the lives of the children.

It is important in my opinion, for anyone working with refugee young people to be aware of the potential tolls and gains it may take on one personally and professionally. Without the appropriate help in my Far-Fetched Project work, I ran the risk of quite serious depression and anxiety, and this after only seeing the group once a week. Likewise, without a full idea of how important this work is, it can become difficult to continue in the face of systemic and relational challenges, the likes of which have been described throughout this paper.

Ultimately I, like the participants in Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch's (2013) survey, relied greatly on my sense of purpose with regards to the relevance of my work to make meaning of my varied and not always positive experiences. Just as I have found creating narrative out of chaos to be an important factor for the refugee young people in this research, so too has it emerged to be vitally important for me.

Chapter Five

And They All Lived Meaningfully Ever After...

This research has attempted to give an introductory exploration of working with refugee young people in transition, using a drama therapeutic modality. This is by no means an exhaustive framework for working with the refugee population, nor should it be read as a recipe for a successful intervention. Ultimately, it is up to the practitioner to meet the individuals and group where they are, and to find a way of moving forward together in as non-prescriptive a manner as possible. However, certain drama therapy techniques have been especially useful for myself as a practitioner in this context.

The importance of story and narrative, not only as a technique, but also as an overarching theme to hold in mind cannot be over emphasised. Story has been an integral part of the human experience, and

[p]ersonal and community stories, especially when told in groups, touch the unconscious parts of the mind, and forgotten experiences are mobilized and remembered. This process helps children who feel they have lost their sense of identity at personal, family and cultural levels. It can restore connections to the firm foundations of their development and, from this, their personal capacities to value themselves and to relate to others.

(Schwartz & Melzak 2005:298)

Both phases of this research have reflected on the need for refugee young people to create narrative from chaos, whether that be through story, social support, increasing role repertoire, or seeking out psychosocial support. The Three2Six school provides more than simply an educational foundation for refugee children, attempting to create an environment where strong friendships can be forged and individuals valued regardless of their background or

current context. However, the school has limited time and resources, and the needs of this particularly vulnerable group of children can be overwhelming and urgent.

I would argue that this research has shown the relevance of drama therapeutic interventions for refugee young people, in particular as part of their growth and transition from Three2Six school onwards. Drama Therapy is flexible enough to provide attentive and student-led therapy without being constrained by the need for large budgets or equipment demands. As such, it is my belief that drama therapy is positioned amongst the arts therapies as a realistic and appropriate intervention for refugee young people at Three2Six school and perhaps beyond.

This research has, however, been limited in terms of time, and further research is needed which expands upon the pilot study that fell within the scope of this particular project. More time in terms of length of sessions, and duration of the intervention as a whole would provide a more comprehensive picture of how drama therapy can be used with this population group, as well as allowing for a longer period in which trust can be built and stories shared.

It is my sincere hope that the children of Three2Six school have benefitted from their involvement in this research, and that future researchers will continue in the field of this difficult but rewarding work, which is captured well by the words of Joseph Campbell as being, “a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return” (1949:32).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Permission from Three2Six School



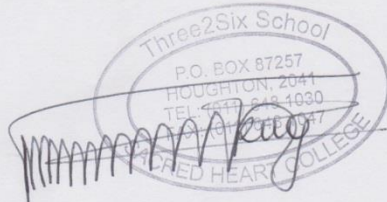
15 Eckstein Street – Observatory - Johannesburg 2198
Tel: 011 648 1030 - Fax: 011 648 1047/5204
P O Box 87257, Houghton 2041

To Whom It May Concern

Date: 27.11.2014

I, hereby give my permission for Monique Hill to conduct weekly drama therapy workshops with grade 6 learners at Three2Six School in the first 3 months of 2015, as part of the research entitled Bridging the Gap: Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners transitioning between grade six and seven.

I understand that these workshops will be held outside of school time and will therefore not impact on the learners' academic responsibilities. I also understand that the onus of collecting the appropriate informed consent and assent will rest with Monique Hill, and that the school is only required to provide a space for the workshops to be held, and access to the school over weekends.



Esther Olive N Munonoka
Three2Six Project Coordinator

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

Interview Participant Information Sheet

Drama For Life Masters Research Report:

Bridging the Gap

Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners transitioning between grade six and seven.

Good Day. My name is Monique Hill and I am a Drama Therapy Masters student at Wits University. I am studying the designing a drama therapy process to providing support for the transition from grade 6 to grade 7 for learners at Three2Six School. It is my hope that this research, which is a requirement of my Masters degree, will give insight into how we can better help refugee learners to integrate into the South African school system. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview around the issues that need to be considered when working with refugee young people in this context. This interview would be recorded and the data transcribed by myself. The audio recording would only be available to myself and my supervisor.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and you are not in any way forced to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate you may choose to withdraw your interview at any time and discontinue your participation. There will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way should you withdraw at any stage in the research process.

At the culmination of the study, the research report will be made available to you should you wish to read it. As the report will be available freely as a Masters Research Paper, you also have the option to have your name changed in the final report, should you wish to do so.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor should you have any queries, complaints or concerns regarding the study at any time.

Thank you so much for your time,

Researcher: Monique Hill (609151@students.wits.ac.za; 0741127435)

Supervisor: Tamara Gordon-Roberts (tamara.gordon-roberts@wits.ac.za; 0826028528)

Interview Consent Form

I hereby consent to participate in a research interview regarding the use of drama therapy for refugee learners transitioning from grade 6 to grade 7. I consent to the interview being recorded, and understand that only the researcher and the research supervisor will have access to this audio recording.

I understand that I am giving this consent freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can withdraw from the process at any time should I not wish to continue and that this decision will not affect me negatively in any way.

The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally. I have received the email address of someone to contact should I need to speak about any issues that may arise in the research process.

(Signature)

(Date)

Appendix C: Guardian Consent Form

Guardian Participant Information Sheet

Drama For Life Masters Research Report:

Bridging the Gap

Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners transitioning between grade six and seven.

Good Day. My name is Monique Hill and I am a Drama Therapy Masters student at Wits University. I am studying the effectiveness of a drama therapy process in providing support for the transition from grade 6 to grade 7 for learners at Three2Six School. It is my hope that this research, which is a requirement of my Masters degree, will give insight into how we can better help refugee learners to integrate into the South African school system. As a legal guardian of a Grade 6 child, I would like to invite your consent for your child to participate in this study. The study will require you to consent to your child participating in 2 hour, weekly drama therapy workshops throughout the first term, preferably on Saturdays.

Please note that your child's participation is completely voluntary and you are not in any way forced to participate in this study. If you or your child chooses not to participate you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate your child may choose to stop at any time and discontinue their participation. There will be no penalties and you and your child will not be prejudiced in any way should you withdraw at any stage in the research process.

At the culmination of the study, the research report will be made available to you should you wish to read it. As the report will be available freely as a Masters Research Paper, no names or identifiers of the children or audience will be used, other than their grade and a brief description of the school, without naming them specifically.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor should you have any queries, complaints or concerns regarding the study at any time.

Thank you so much for your time,

Researcher: Monique Hill (609151@students.wits.ac.za; 0741127435)

Supervisor: Tamara Gordon-Roberts (tamara.gordon-roberts@wits.ac.za; 0826028528)

Guardian Consent Form

I hereby consent for my child to participate in research regarding the use of drama therapy for refugee learners transitioning from grade 6 to grade 7. I consent for my child to be a part of 2 hour long, weekly drama therapy workshops throughout the first term of 2015.

I understand that I am giving this consent freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can withdraw my child from the process at any time should I not wish them to continue and that this decision will not affect them negatively in any way.

The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally. I have received the email address of someone to contact should I need to speak about any issues that may arise in the research process.

(Signature of Legal Guardian)

(Date)

Appendix D: Participant Assent Form

Participant Information Sheet

Drama For Life Masters Research Report:

Bridging the Gap

Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners transitioning between grade six and seven.

Hello. My name is Monique Hill and I am a Drama Therapy Masters student at Wits University. I would like to run a drama therapy group with grade 6 learners from Three2Six school as a part of my degree. This group will be about your experiences as a learner about to move to another school for grade 7. I would like to invite you to be a part of this group in term 1. If you agree, you will need to commit to one workshop a week, for 6 weeks.

This group is voluntary, which means that you don't have to be a part of the study if you don't want to. If you would like to be a part of the group, but you change your mind during the term, you can always ask to stop the group. No one will be upset if you decide not to be a part of the group, it is okay to change your mind at any time. If you do decide to take part, your legal guardian or parent will need to sign a form to allow you to be part of the group.

At the end of the group, I will write a report that will not have your name or any specific details about you in it, other than the fact that you are in grade 6. This report will be read by many different people, but they won't be able to tell that it was you in the group. I will not be sharing any information about you with your teachers or guardians, other than what is in this report. If you need someone to talk to during or after the process, you or your guardian can call Tamara Gordon-Roberts, a qualified drama therapist, and she can help you for free. Her phone number is 0826028528.

If you have any questions before you make your decision, please come and talk to me, or ask your parent or guardian to phone me.

Thank you very much,

Monique Hill (609151@students.wits.ac.za; 0741127435)

Supervisor: Tamara Gordon-Roberts (tamara.gordon-roberts@wits.ac.za; 0826028528)

Assent Form

I would like to be a part of the drama therapy group about Three2Six grade 6 learners moving on to grade 7 at different schools. I have been spoken to about the group and I understand that I will be a part of a weekly group during term 1.

I know that I do not have to be a part of this group, and I am not being forced to take part. I know that I can stop coming to the group if I start to feel uncomfortable at any time, and I will not be in trouble.

I understand that this group is not for marks, and is extra-curricular. I have the phone number of someone that I can call if I need to ask questions at any time.

(Signature of Learner)

(Date)